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Pravda Examines Cuba's "Firm Revolutionary Line" [REDACTED]

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The praise Moscow and Havana lavished on their relationship in early May on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Soviet-Cuban relations masked serious problems stemming from Moscow's desire to reduce the burden of upholding Cuba and Havana's unwillingness to introduce meaningful reforms that would help achieve that objective. An article appearing in Pravda May 22 makes the point that Cuba's problems are severe but that the Cubans are willing only to look backward for ways to solve them. The article's appearance in Pravda is especially significant because, unlike more reform-oriented publications, the party newspaper has been relatively positive in its reporting on Cuba. [REDACTED]

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The article, written by Pravda's Havana correspondent and entitled "'The Party is Responsible for Everything....'" after a quotation from Granma, the official organ of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), describes Cuba's rigid adherence to orthodox Marxism-Leninism, in particular Cuba's defense of the role of the PCC as the guiding force in society. To the Soviet reader, who has grown more accustomed to reform-minded thinking even in the pages of Pravda, the Cuban rhetoric, which the author describes as "filled with the vocabulary of 30 years ago," can only appear anachronistic. [REDACTED]

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The author observes that Cuba's current system unfortunately was created by borrowing what were not "the best specimens from the USSR's stagnant past." But he notes that Cuba is willing only to tinker with this outmoded system rather than undertake significant reform. It appears that the author is chastising Cuba for trying to improve its economy by means of its "rectification of errors" campaign--increased control, more ideological and educative work, and ever-louder preaching of the message to work harder--rather than by implementing substantive economic reforms that may generate increased worker incentive. The author's observation that Cuba's dogmatism is justified "to some extent" by the continued economic and military threat from the US suggests that he believes this is insufficient to completely justify Cuba's unwillingness to adopt new methods to resolve its serious problems. [redacted]

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By the selective use of quotation marks to set off certain phrases, the author reveals his doubts about the substance behind many Cuban policies. For instance, he writes that Cuba is returning to an atmosphere of "'nationwide enthusiasm'" generated by mass rallies and that Cuba plans to make extensive and intensive use of free "'voluntary'" labor to solve its problems. The author seems to indicate that Cuba's assessment of the US threat is exaggerated by referring to the "'sword of Damocles'" of US hostility hanging over the island. The message conveyed by the quotation marks is that the Cuban people are less-than-enthusiastic, their willingness to work harder is less-than-voluntary, and that while the Yankee threat is something to be wary of, it is no sword of Damocles. [redacted]

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The author signals his displeasure both with the amount of Soviet aid Cuba has been receiving and the way Cuba uses that aid, clearly advocating that the USSR should provide less in the future. He writes that tremendous long-term Soviet aid has generated "freeloading sentiments" in Cuba and has retarded Cuba's economic development. [REDACTED]

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This article does nothing to soothe the concerns of the growing number of Soviet critics of the Cuban relationship who believe the price tag of supporting Cuba is too big. In fact, its frank portrayal of Cuba's political tactics that run counter to reforms being implemented in the Soviet Union and of Cuba's unwillingness to adopt meaningful economic reforms make continued aid to Cuba even more difficult to justify. The appearance of this article in Pravda is probably intended to send a message to the Cubans that despite the warm atmosphere created by the celebration of thirty years of relations, Moscow has not forgotten its differences with Havana and expects Cuba to move to narrow them. Moscow has been silent on the issue of political reform in Cuba, but by its roundabout portrayal of Cuba's political system as anachronistic, Pravda may be indicating that certain political reforms, in particular decentralization of power, are necessary in order to implement successful economic reforms. [REDACTED]

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